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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Linda Justice, Air Traffic Controller, Area 6 (Imperial Sector) Cleveland ARTCC

Type of event: Interview

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Special Access Issues: None

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Team Number: 8

Location: Cleveland Air Traffic Control Center

Participants - Non-Commission: Linda Justice, CLE Center and Michael McKinley, FAA
Attorney

Participants - Commission: John Farmer, Dana Hyde, and Lisa Sullivan

Linda Justice is a air traffic controller in Area 6 for Imperial Sector on 9-11.

She was a 911 police dispatcher in Chicago before becoming an air traffic controller. She started out in Chicago Center for 3 years and was transferred to Cleveland after that. She has been a controller for 21 years. She said she has regular refresher training every year, usually through CBI lab, VHS, or a memo on hijacking.

In simulation labs representing hijack scenarios, the controller has to look for them to say "trip" and squak a different mode. "Squak" or "trip" are signals to the controller of a hijacking. Deviating from the course or transponder switch was never incorporated into the simulation.

In the event a plane went "NORDO" the controller would check with the previous controller, next controller; finally the controller would get in touch with the air carrier. Primary targets are confusing in a high pressure area.

She experienced this situation (NORDO and no transponder) one time before in Chicago. It was a military plane. The controller handing off to her lost the primary target and delayed in telling her about it, and he was very close to a lot of planes. This was 20 years ago. Guy before me lost him. By the time they found him, he had flown through two other air spaces. They called everybody asking someone found him. He had gone through two others air spaces. It was a very uncomfortable situation at 17,000 feet during the eastbound push out of O'Hare.

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She reiterated, "Whether or not NORAD would be involved, my only responsibility was to tell the supervisor." She was on the D-side, so she did not hear the frequency. Only the controller listens to the frequency. "The controller would continue to try and communicate with the plane. The goal is to get the most information out of the plane as you can."

Pre 9-11, the concept of SCATANA was foreign to her. She didn't remember what the term meant other than that it came from the 1970s. She thought it might be a scenario set up for landing all the planes.

She had the 7AM shift on 9-11. She worked one session and took a break for breakfast. She was in Allegheny D side AREA 6 resumed working. Her supervisor said something about a plane crashing into the WTC. She remembers she accused him of being a liar. She didn't believe it. Andy Landers, who has since retired, was saying this. Finally, she realized he was serious.

She believes the process was underway to land all the planes when UA 93 was "coming back at us" (meaning eastbound). First, she heard of UA 93 having a problem. She moved from Allegheny to Imperial because all the planes were coming down and it was at a lower level. Some one called from Lorain sector and told her that the plane had shut off its transponder. He gave her a track and he pointed it out to everyone because there was no secondary track on it. Briggs, Tyrone, and Indianhead (all low air space within the Center) were all notified.

Lorain handed UA 93 off to her right before entering Imperial. Indianhead / Imperial space was where UA 93 was located when he crashed. Technically, he was in Indianhead (area 5). Originally, she tried to hand him off to Washington Center because she thought he was going back there and then finally she received a report of a plane flying at 8,000 feet. If that plane was UA 93, she knew it wouldn't make it to Washington Center.

When she saw the plane was heading eastbound, she changed the routing of the plane. "The easiest way to do a handoff is to change the flight plan," she said. She changed the plan to show that Washington Center was the recipient. In her opinion, it was an unpopular decision because "That is also where Camp David is." The controversial step was putting in Hagerstown because the misconception was that she had communicated with the plane and cleared it through. The tag read, "Hagerstown - National." Before, the tag had read LAX (its original destination).

The next step she took was to call Potomac to tell them to pull up the data block. It was clear to them that she had created the "destination" in order to make it easier to find the plane.

Within one minute, she took the hand-off back because UA 93 had again changed directions. If he had continued flying in her air space, she would have had him for plenty of time. Instead, she "watched him disappear off the radar scope..UA 93 had 2-3 radar returns at 8,200 feet and then it was gone."

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Bill Keaton was working the radar in Indianhead sector, which is at a lower altitude than Imperial. He turned a C-130 back to investigate the source of the smoke. The pilot confirmed to the controller that UA 93 had crashed. Time of the crash, according to Cleveland Center, is 10:03 a.m.

She kept working other planes, helping them to land. Once sectors were cleared, controllers were made to leave the building because there was thought to be a threat to the Center.

Justice commented that Keaton had asked pilots to turn back to investigate the smoke, and the C-130 was willing to do it. In the situation, "there are no rules; no protocols on what an ATC can direct a pilot to do." Pilots were very cooperative, very helpful that day... It may be helpful to have clearer guidance on ATC and pilots protocols, but she does not think that is necessary. "It is an issue of common sense rather than protocol," Justice said. Furthermore, she does not think something like this would ever happen again.

She thought Scatana training wasn't all that useful for what they faced on 9-11. She thought the chain of command on the floor was tight. Kim Wernica, Gary, Kettel were all there and very visible. She doesn't remember the military's involvement. Specifically, she doesn't remember other fighters in the air.

She stressed the difficult associated with a situation in which the controller does not know what altitude the plane was flying at. Many were working on the presumption the plane was still up high. To have disappeared so quickly meant that something had happened to the plane. There were military aircrafts located about Pittsburgh, she thought. The report that UA 93 was at 8000 feet came as a surprise. "8000 feet to the ground is like nothing," she said.

Planes are rerouted all the time because of changing weather conditions. This is not unusual. The same thing happens with mechanical difficulties.

Back when she got the handoff she believed it was heading toward DC. It looked like he was heading right down the shoot traveled by all westbound departures from DC.

Why weren't all planes given warning? Why weren't the controllers more direct with pilots? Justice thought that it was the air carrier's responsibility to communicate to the pilots that morning. The controllers didn't want to endanger the pilots that might be in a compromised situation. She is not trained to say "you are being hijacked?!" over the frequency.

Her understanding was that the ACARS system would convey the message. She thinks she was told that. In her opinion, the pilots must have been aware of what was going on because they weren't questioning the controllers' decisions to bring them down.

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From where the plane went down, how long would it have taken him to get to DC from the point at which he was lost? "Conceivably, UA 93 could have gotten to DC in 15 minutes," at the speed he was going.

In the aftermath, Justice said there wasn't a whole lot other than the writing of statements that was done after the incident. Counseling sessions were not mandated. She didn't listen to the tape of her handling the plane that day until she was preparing for the interview with Commission staff. No one has ever interviewed her about her involvement on 9-11 before.

Today, she felt her job is "back to normal." We are more aggressive and less patient with scenarios such as transponder off and NORDO. Pilots were initially more vigilant. Now, we are "back to the old days."

She always tells trainees that you won't ever see the same situation twice. She had no recommendations for the Commission, because she does not feel like any changes are needed to the ATC system in this country.